



SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 57 (PRINCE GEORGE)

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August 24, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We would like to share the important information the Ministry of Education has released about the return to in-class instruction for the 2020-21 school year in British Columbia and how it will look in School District No. 57.

The Ministry has introduced a gradual restart beginning Sept, 8, 2020 to allow extra time to orient students and staff to the updated COVID-19 health and safety measures. School District No. 57 is working within the new guidelines – co-developed by the Ministry of Education, BC Centre for Disease Control and the Provincial Health Officer – and is developing implementation plans specific to our schools.

Starting on Tuesday, Sept. 8, staff will meet with the joint health and safety committees of their respective schools to receive instructions about how the guidelines will work in their school. This will allow time for staff to adjust to their new routines, finalize plans for learning groups, review health and safety protocols and confirm lesson plans that align with the new normal in schools.

We will begin welcoming our students back to school for orientation **Thursday, Sept. 10**. Schools will provide every family with the specific information about when their child(ren) will be welcomed. During this gradual entry orientation, students will have the opportunity to get familiar with new-look classrooms configured with health and safety measures as the top priority. Students will be assigned to their classroom, find out who is in their learning group, practice their new routines and familiarize themselves with how to safely be part of their new school environment.

School District No. 57 received a readiness checklist from the Ministry of Education on Aug. 10, 2020. Since then, we have been carefully updating our health and safety plans while consulting with our stakeholders and rightsholders. We are ensuring that our plans address equity and inclusion of children who require additional support in school.

Our goal for this school year is to have every student return to a caring, supportive classroom learning environment that we have come to expect in School District No. 57. We are led by our moral grounding and strong belief in the emotional, social and learning benefits that a face to face classroom experience provides in comparison to other options. Having students in the classroom helps to minimize the learning gaps and provides the academic, social and emotional supports essential for learning success. The new guidelines inspire our confidence that this modified return to in-class instruction is a very safe way to proceed and indeed, is the right choice for students, particularly those who require additional supports.

We continue to focus our work under the four foundational principles established at the beginning of the pandemic:

- Maintain a healthy and safe environment for all students, families, teachers and staff.
- Provide the services needed to support the children of essential workers.
- Support vulnerable student who may need special assistance.
- Provide continuity of educational opportunity for all students.

Results from the Ministry of Education parent survey indicates that over 70% of respondents indicated that they felt their child’s learning and social–emotional experience decreased with the learn from home model initiated in response to COVID-19 in April 2020. We have paid careful attention not only to the evidence collected in BC but also to the data collected in other jurisdictions across the globe. In places like Denmark and New Zealand, where school is in full attendance, there has not been evidence of an increase in COVID cases, and in fact, there has even been a significant decrease in the New Zealand cold and flu season as a result of the physical distancing, increased cleaning protocols and personal hygiene expectations similar to those we are implementing in BC.

In our planning, we are receiving support and guidance from the provincial K-12 Education Restart Steering Committee and from working groups formed by education partners and health experts. Key points of their guidance includes:

- implementing the updated health and safety protocols;
- ensuring students who require extra support are prioritized and have the services they need;
- supporting the mental health and wellness of students who may be experiencing additional challenges because of the pandemic;
- ensuring fewer contacts and a safe workplace for those who interact with more than one learning group – such as specialists, teachers on call, educational assistants, cafeteria staff and bus drivers;
- minimizing physical contact within learning groups; and
- ensuring before- and after-school child care on school grounds allows kids to stay within their learning groups as much as possible.

We will provide you with our complete Stage 2 plan later this week, as soon as it is approved by the Ministry of Education, but I wanted to provide you with some current up to date information along with some valuable information in the form of our Frequently Asked Questions document. All updated information will also be posted on our website (sd57.bc.ca).

Please understand our proposed plan is pending approval from the Ministry of Education. It is important to note, as our education landscape continues to evolve due to COVID-19, our District could make changes at any time. Our commitment is to share the most up-to-date information available.

Please note our timeline:

Date	Action
August 21	District submits plan to Ministry District shares preview of plan
August 26 or earlier	District to share Ministry approved plan
August 26 – September 4	Schools to share site-based specific plans and any additional information

ORIENTATION WEEK

Date	Action
September 8/9	Only school-based staff on site at schools to learn safety measures and protocols

September 10/11	<p>Students are welcomed to school to learn to safely be part of the school environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School administrators will be sharing details regarding start times/length of day/end times and other school specific information. Parents should expect students to only be in attendance for a portion of one day depending on the school ○ School administrators or Kindergarten teachers will be sharing details regarding start times/length of day/end times and other specific information. Parents should expect students to only be in attendance for a portion of time on certain days depending on the school.
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IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION BEGINS

Date	Action
September 14	<p>All students attend school full-time in their safe and caring learning groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please Note: School administrators will be sharing any remaining details in regards to the school term.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation as we work toward the return to school in September being the safest and healthiest experience for your child. Our staff is looking forward to welcoming your child(ren), re-engaging with students in classrooms and continuing to provide high-quality learning environments for all.

Sincerely,



Anita Richardson
Superintendent of Schools